United Nations A/66/PV.20

General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

20th plenary meeting
Friday, 23 September 2011, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Cazeau (Haiti), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Pál Schmitt, President of the Republic of Hungary

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Hungary.

Mr. Pál Schmitt, President of the Republic of Hungary, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Pál Schmitt, President of the Republic of Hungary, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Schmitt: Let me at the outset welcome South Sudan as the 193rd Member of the United Nations. I commend the successful conduct of the referendum on independence as a manifestation of the principle of self-determination. That historic act has put an end to a long civil war on the African continent and opened up new horizons for the stability and prosperity of the people of South Sudan.

Hungary fully aligns itself with the statement made earlier by President Van Rompuy on behalf of the European Union. To complement this, allow me to outline my country's position on three issues figuring high on our foreign policy and development agenda, namely, the Arab Spring, sustainable development and the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.

More than 20 years ago, Central and Eastern Europe, including my country, Hungary, was the scene of sweeping political changes. Beginning in early 2011, the world has witnessed, yet again, the outburst of popular will for profound transformation, this time in North Africa and the Middle East. Those of us who took active part in the democratization process and the transition to the rule of law and market economies in our region have been following the events of the Arab Spring with great empathy and understanding.

The revolutions leading to sweeping shifts in Tunisia, Egypt and other countries were equally driven by sincere desires for a better life and for putting in place new political systems capable of better responding to the aspirations of all parts of society. The voices of Tahrir Square echoed the aspirations of millions of people.

The overthrow of autocratic regimes is, nevertheless, only the first step in that direction. As shown by our own experience, the most difficult stages of the transformation process are yet to come. The victorious popular uprisings of the Arab Spring have encountered tremendous challenges in terms of establishing new power structures, drafting new constitutions and other basic laws, as well as conducting free and democratic elections, just to mention a few. Essentially those measures require an

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internally driven process, carried out with the support of the international community.

Hungarian society has, on the one hand, already successfully met many of those challenges and, on the other hand, made some avoidable mistakes. We therefore feel equipped to share our experiences and to offer a substantive toolkit for good governance and democratic change. As a good friend and supporting partner, Hungary truly hopes that those undergoing transitional periods today will be able to benefit from both our achievements and our omissions.

Far be it from us, of course, to try to give advice or provide ready-made solutions. While we advocate the universal character of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the virtues of the rule of law and good governance, we believe that those ideals can be implemented only in conjunction with respect for the cultural, religious and other traditions of each nation.

At this stage of what we see as a long transformation process in the Arab world, we thus offer to share our own experiences and lessons learned. The Hungarian Government, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, has already carried out, and plans to carry out in future, concrete projects and programmes aimed at, inter alia, assisting the new emerging democracies in North Africa and the Middle East in the field of institution-building, security-sector reform, and drawing up the legislative framework for political and economic renewal. We welcome the central role and increasing involvement of the United Nations and its various agencies in support of the democratization of those countries. Hungary stands ready to contribute to such efforts and provide its specialized expertise.

Over the past two decades, since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the three pillars of sustainable development have been the focus of the international development agenda. Time has shown that only a coherent approach to the environmental, economic and social aspects of this concept can ensure the long-term survival and prosperity of mankind. We should not miss this chance to formulate new courses of action in this era of reinforced mutual interdependence and globalization.

Against the background of the constantly deteriorating global environment, it is an increasingly demanding task to strike the necessary balance between ensuring growth in all regions of the world, a decent life for our societies and the preservation of natural resources in the interests of the survival of our planet. One of the responses to this dilemma is the concept of a green economy, which is gaining ever-greater support. We consider the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development as a unique event aimed at generating the widest possible support for and acceptance of this green concept. Its goal is to support the sustainability of socio-economic development at the national, regional and global levels.

In addition, the concept of a green economy has the potential to also contribute to job creation and the eradication of poverty. If implemented in a coherent manner, it will create new resources for achieving the internationally agreed development goals. There is no doubt that achieving these goals will require innovative thinking in terms of technology transfer, investment and fair trade.

In order to put this concept into practice, a reorganization of the environmental architecture of the United Nations is needed. Such reform should pursue the goal of streamlining and unifying the existing structures, with a view to increasing the coherence and efficiency of the system as a whole.

It is our shared responsibility to develop joint strategies to mitigate the effects of non-communicable diseases. Their rapid growth is preventable and can be controlled to a significant extent. Hungary has been in the forefront of this fight, with national cancer and diabetes control systems in place that may contribute to paving the way for functional alternatives around the world. It is also our fundamental belief that the development of comprehensive national and regional strategies for control programmes can significantly lower the incidence of these illnesses. This can contribute to prevention, early detection and adequate treatment in a cost-effective way. We are also proud of Hungary's long-standing tradition of sharing knowledge and providing educational and training programmes for students and experts from all over the world. In the past decades, hundreds of students from outside Hungary have obtained their medical degrees in our country. We are cooperating with various countries, sharing knowledge and experiences in order to contribute to the collective efforts that need to be made to bring about better health worldwide.

The High-level Meeting gave momentum to this fight, which needs to be fought not only on an

individual level by the victims of these diseases, but also by our countries and by the international community working together. We need to capitalize on this in order to reach the ultimate goal of saving lives around the world and thereby move further towards one of the founding objectives of the United Nations: human development.

As members may know, Hungary has put forward its candidacy for Security Council membership in 2012-2013. We continue to uphold the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, such as the equality of nations, the peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for human rights. Hungary also stands ready to contribute in a meaningful way to all efforts aimed at enhancing the capabilities of the United Nations in the field of conflict prevention and mediation. We believe in an integrated approach to conflict resolution and will advocate a stronger integration of security and development concerns, as well as enhanced interaction between the Council and other main organs of the United Nations.

Let me conclude by assuring the Assembly once again that Hungary will continue to contribute its utmost to strengthening the global cooperation of countries within the United Nations system, which is so strongly needed to tackle today's challenges.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Hungary for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pál Schmitt, President of the Republic of Hungary, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Koroma: I am honoured to address the Assembly once again. Let me, first of all, congratulate the President on his election to his duties of directing the affairs of the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I would like to assure him of our full support and cooperation throughout his tenure. And I commend his predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss, for a job well done. We appreciate the Secretary-General's important contribution to the work of the Organization and congratulate him on his recent appointment to a second term.

On behalf of the Government and people of Sierra Leone, let me take this opportunity to welcome the Republic of South Sudan, the newest Member of the United Nations family and our continental organization, the African Union. We congratulate them on this achievement and wish them well.

Sierra Leone is a nation with a relatively small territory and population, but our aspirations to democracy, prosperity and international peace are as big as any nation's, and our commitment to those ideals has been visibly demonstrated in the course of our 50 years as an independent nation. We are proud of the distinctive contributions we have made to the United Nations over the past half-century in areas such as decolonization; training and research; the international civil service; disarmament and non-proliferation, including small arms and light weapons; peacemaking and peacekeeping; the development of international law; and, currently, reform of the Security Council.

It is worth mentioning that, soon after our admission to the United Nations, we contributed a small peacekeeping contingent to the United Nations Operation in the Congo. Our commitment to international peace is evidenced by our transformation from a nation that received one of the largest ever United Nations peacekeeping missions in the late 1990s to a country that today contributes troops and police officers to peacekeeping missions in Darfur. We have also developed a proposal to participate in the African Union Mission in Somalia. At the same time, we acknowledge with gratitude the enormous impact that the United Nations family has had on the maintenance of peace, governance and economic and

social development in my country since our admission to the Organization, 50 years ago.

In my capacity as Chair of the African Union Committee of Ten Heads of State and Government on the Reform of the United Nations Security Council, I must emphasize that reform of the Council is urgently required for the wider United Nations membership to fully benefit from the Council's purposes and primary objective of maintaining international peace and security. There is an increasing need for the Security Council to be more representative, inclusive and democratic, as well as for an improvement in its working methods and its relations with the General Assembly. The status quo is increasingly unacceptable and has the potential to undermine the legitimacy, effectiveness and efficiency of the Council's work in maintaining international peace and security.

It is therefore imperative that we reaffirm our commitment to the standards and principles of this noble Organization by generating the political will for a reformed Security Council that would pave the way for correcting the historical injustice done to Africa, through the allocation during this session of two permanent and five non-permanent seats to Africa, in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

Since I addressed the Assembly last year, Sierra Leone has continued to make steady progress, particularly in the priority sectors outlined in my Government's agenda for change, namely, agriculture, energy, infrastructure, health and education. Those five sectors were purposely selected from many others requiring transformation because we believe they can have the greatest positive impact on the lives of our people. We have done so against the background of the unprecedented challenges facing our world today, such as the rise in fuel and food prices, the global financial crisis, and the chain of unending conflicts around the world.

Inspired by the conviction that no goals, however comprehensive or meaningful, can be achieved without the sustained determination to implement them, I have declared 2011 the year of implementation for Sierra Leone. Accordingly, my Government has demonstrated its commitment to that declaration. We are going to ensure that every single Sierra Leonean benefits from the dividends of our well-earned peace and democracy. In spite of the many challenges that have impeded our capacity to complete our projects, we are determined, with the cooperation and support of our development partners, to accelerate our country's positive transformation. It is my sincere hope that successful implementation of the projects and programmes in the Joint Vision of the United Nations Family for Sierra Leone, which has been aligned with our agenda for change, will enhance Sierra Leone's efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals.

The economy of Sierra Leone, like many around the world, is currently encountering budgetary difficulties that can be traced to the global economic meltdown. We are, however, optimistic about future growth levels. We expect export levels to increase, given our substantial investment in developing our infrastructure and ongoing revamping of our mining, agriculture and tourism sectors. We have also put in place strong corrective measures to stabilize the fiscal situation.

We have continued to build on progress achieved in the area of peace consolidation. Our democratic institutions, such as the National Electoral Commission, the Political Parties Registration Commission and the Anti-Corruption Commission, have continued to make progress in carrying out their respective mandates. We have also continued to build on gains achieved in the areas of human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment.

The establishment of a Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone and the presentation of our national report to the Universal Periodic Review Working Group of the United Nations Human Rights Council in May this year are clear manifestations of our commitment to build a human rights regime that respects international norms and practices. In June this year, the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions awarded an "A" status accreditation to the Human Rights Commission of Siena Leone in recognition of its achievements and independence.

I have pledged my support and initiated processes that will make women constitute at least 30 per cent of elective offices in our country. As a State party to many international human rights instruments we are committed to their implementation and respect our reporting obligations under the relevant conventions. We have, for instance, just completed our sixth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. We have ratified the

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and have commissioned a National Action Plan for the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008).

As we prepare for our 2012 presidential, parliamentary and local council elections, we are cognizant of the fact that it is our primary responsibility to organize and provide the necessary logistical requirements for this democratic process. However, we need all necessary international assistance in support of our commitment to ensure free, fair and peaceful elections. In that regard, we have continued to dialogue with all stakeholders including the National Electoral Commission, the Political Parties Registration Commission and political parties. We remain committed to peace, security and development, but the need to continue with national capacity-building programmes in priority peacebuilding thematic areas beyond the 2012 elections remains critical.

Recently, peace and stability were not only threatened but painfully disturbed by pockets of armed conflict in the subregion of the Economic Community of West African States, particularly in the Mano River Union basin. However, we are encouraged by the unfolding developments and prospects of relative peace in our sister republics. At the same time, we are concerned about the continued threats posed to peace and stability by the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons across our subregion. International cooperation and assistance are necessary in order to eradicate this menace. Sierra Leone, for its part, recently launched a five-year action plan to expand the scope of its activities concerning small arms and light weapons.

Considering the prevailing incidence of violence and armed conflict in various regions of the world, the choice of the theme, "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes", for this year's general debate is relevant and appropriate.

Of course, we are quite conscious of the inevitability of disputes in the conduct of inter-State as well as intra-State relations. But it is imperative to respect the set of principles enshrined in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations in our interactions with each other. They include the sovereign equality of all United Nations Members, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the prohibition of the threat or use of force.

Obviously, mediation remains the best mechanism for the prevention and settlement of armed conflicts. It should be utilized to the fullest extent possible. Sierra Leone firmly believes that the United Nations should make better use of Chapter VI of the Charter, namely, measures for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

We must also allow our discussion of the mediation of disputes through peaceful means to move towards the resolution of threats to the international economic and financial systems. The greatest threat today to the security of most individuals in most societies stems from the non-resolution of issues relating to excessive speculation in the most important food crops of the world, the rising food and fuel prices and the fact that the burden of sacrifice for our recovery is increasingly placed on the shoulders of the weak and the poor.

In most places in the world we are seeing the rallying of the strong and powerful to protect their indulgence and the rallying of young people, the weak and the dispossessed to secure their very lives, their dignity and humanity. The alternatives to the non-resolution of those disputes are dire. We must act now to save the world from the anger of the weak and the excessive indulgence and repression perpetrated by the strong.

I would like to emphasize that international cooperation in the peaceful settlement of disputes is the life blood of our Organization. In all our deliberations, from global warming to human trafficking, from the threats of nuclear weapons to the scourge of abject poverty, from communicable and non-communicable diseases to ruthless natural disasters, and from the flow of illicit drugs to the seemingly unending upheavals in the financial markets, we should always remember that we need each other. The world is too connected for the consequences of failure to be localized.

The effects of poverty, disease, hunger and desperation can no longer be boxed in and contained in a corner of a city, or a country, region or continent. We are on each other's doorsteps, and we must continue to build the structures for the peaceful resolution of our conflicts.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the

President of the Republic of Sierra Leone for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tadić: The rapid changes in our political and economic environment show, once again, the necessity of this annual gathering of the General Assembly of the United Nations. We have a difficult task ahead of us. I wish the President of the General Assembly every success. He can rest assured that he has our fullest support. I also wish to congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his reappointment. His steady hand has helped to steer the United Nations through challenging times. To him, too, we offer all our support.

It has been a year of momentous change. An economic crisis pervades most liberal economies. A wave of political change is sweeping through much of the Middle East. Climatic turbulence leaves loss and tragedy in its wake. Famine stalks the Horn of Africa. New choices confront political leaders. New priorities are presented to citizens. The worst that we could do now is to allow fear and indecision to govern us.

These are also times that call for a deep commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism. Every crisis that we address reaches beyond our national frontiers. There is no way that we can resolve such matters without the framework of the international laws and rules to which we are all bound.

The financial crisis has had a profound and negative effect on all our aspirations. While each country must adjust its expectations, we cannot allow ourselves to be guided only by our national concerns. In fact, they are best supported by greater commitment to a deeper solidarity among nations and far more intense cooperation. The great economic and political unions have achieved success by balancing sacrifice with gain for all. The same challenge now confronts the European Union (EU).

In North Africa and the Middle East, we have seen a wave of protest that has convulsed the region. The Republic of Serbia and the Serbian people have had a long relationship with all the peoples of that region. We stand by them. We know what is involved in such changes.

In a time of such uncertainty, crises call for United Nations-sanctioned involvement to save lives and to keep the peace. There will be more such missions. I am very pleased that the Republic of Serbia is now actively engaged in several such missions, and we will continue our commitment. In that spirit, the Republic of Serbia is a signatory to the evolving climate change commitments and conventions. We also enthusiastically support the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

In times as complex as these, our objective must be to manage real crises well and to avoid creating unnecessary ones. There are problems that can be resolved through patient discussion and the building of trust. Unilateral action in such circumstances simply creates crisis for no good reason.

That is why, in our regional issues of South Eastern Europe, we always promote the principles and the presence of the United Nations. As a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement, we were able to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its founding in Belgrade. Such networks create layers of communication and trust at a time of globalization.

Our bid to join the European Union is the platform on which we intend to build and contribute to our shared objectives. Regional cooperation is a cornerstone of our diplomacy, and we believe that it is only to the benefit of the entire region. That is reflected in our chairmanships of the Central European Initiative and the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. Most important, it is also reflected in Serbia's chairmanship of the South-East European Cooperation Process, our region's most important initiative. Next year, my country will follow

that up by taking over responsibilities to lead the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization.

Serbia has established an entirely new level of confidence in relations with Croatia. That has been of strategic significance in securing stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We welcome Croatia's imminent accession to the European Union.

All of that has set the stage for Serbia to actively consider seeking the chairmanship-in-office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for the year 2014 — the centenary of the start of the First World War. The unifying symbolism of 2014 would not only help catalyse efforts to resolve the unfinished business on the old continent's shared agenda. It would also help to close the book on an era that did not witness the enduring stability that the nations of the OSCE space deserve.

We have devoted extraordinary levels of resources to capture war criminals. Finally, the Republic of Serbia has completed its obligations to itself and to the international community. We believe that, after the tragedies of the 1990s, that exercise is a very necessary catharsis for our nation. That action was also taken to demonstrate that Serbia wishes to move to a climate of total reconciliation throughout the region. We feel that we have done our part.

Equally, we insist that everyone else does their part as well. As in all previous instances involving war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Balkans, the Security Council has given a mandate to investigate. That has greatly contributed to the process of regional reconciliation. This is the standard that must be applied in uncovering the full truth about allegations made in a deeply disturbing report by the Council of Europe, entitled "Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo". Only the Security Council can make sure a comprehensive investigation takes place. Only it can give a universal mandate and jurisdiction to ensure that all perpetrators of war crimes in the Balkans are brought to justice, including those responsible for trafficking in human organs in Kosovo. I strongly believe that ending the culture of impunity in some parts of the Balkans is a common goal shared by every member of the international community.

There is a certain irony to our proceedings today. This year we have welcomed a new member to the United Nations family, the Republic of South Sudan. The Republic of Serbia welcomes its membership in the United Nations. We welcome them because they and the Republic of the Sudan, after many years of conflict, arrived at a settlement that was achieved as a result of long, difficult negotiations between the two parties.

The fundamental principle that the best settlements occur when two parties agree, each making compromises, surely is universal. I subscribe enthusiastically to the comments by the President of the United States, made from this rostrum, on that very subject of negotiations. I agree that there is no shortcut to ending a conflict that has endured for a long time, and that peace depends on compromise among people, who must live together long after our speeches are over.

However, this rule is not being applied to Serbia on the matter of its province of Kosovo and Metohija. On 17 February 2008, Kosovo's ethnic Albanian authorities attempted unilateral secession, a violation of the basic principles of the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). A majority of Member States have refrained from recognizing Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence. They have continued to abide by their United Nations Charter obligations to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country. On behalf of the Republic of Serbia, allow me to once again sincerely thank those countries for their support and solidarity.

Earlier this week, we heard from this rostrum a dangerous appeal for countries to recognize Kosovo. That appeal does not contribute to regional stability. Rather, it lessens our chances of finding a solution we can all accept. The appeal we heard is not an appeal for peace but an appeal to endorse unilateralism and would create a deeply disturbing precedent, namely, encouragement for secessionists everywhere.

In July, talks between Belgrade and Pristina, facilitated by the European Union, were briefly suspended by the facilitator. At that time, there was an attempt to impose customs officers on the administrative boundary line between Serbia proper and North Kosovo. Violence erupted. My Government did all it could to prevent violence from spreading, but was this necessary? The effect was to remind Serbs that they are negotiating with a gun to their heads and with the constant threat of international isolation. It reminds

Serbs that the excuse of violence by others is a tool used irresponsibly to threaten Serbs. It reminds Serbs of the anti-Serb pogroms in Kosovo in March of 2004. It reminds Serbs of the failed negotiations and the imposition of a unilaterally declared independence.

I want to remind the Assembly and all Members of the United Nations that on 5 October 2000 the Republic of Serbia voluntarily and peacefully overthrew its past and entered a new phase in its history, in which it placed the fate of the Serbian nation under the protection of democracy, civility, peace and dialogue.

For this reason, we take grave offence at this climate of threat emanating from countries that we would otherwise consider our most natural partners. In the case of Serbia, the dialogue between two parties was initiated in March 2011, following a delay of several months to accommodate the electoral schedule in Pristina.

We have made very significant progress during those negotiations. The Republic of Serbia, I assure the Assembly, will remain a very active party to this dialogue. There are numerous issues that must be addressed in the months ahead. I appeal to all involved to remain engaged in this process in a constructive spirit. To that end, we expect the International Security Force in Kosovo and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo to fully observe the United Nations doctrine of status neutrality, in accordance with their mandates under Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), the source of their universal legitimacy, both on the ground and in the international arena.

Progress needs trust. Negotiations and reconciliation are not achieved through concessions from one side only. Success does not occur when threats of violence are issued and coercive action takes place in the course of negotiations. Our response to this is to say that, just as we will never accept unilateral action, we will also not abandon the negotiation process.

This is why we have stated that we cannot and will not recognize the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo. It is also why we believe that we must settle all other issues with Pristina, because our region needs to have a stable environment.

The Republic of Serbia has always sought tangible assurances, bound by international agreement and guarantees, that Serbian communities inhabiting Kosovo, Serbian interests and Serbia's cultural heritage will be protected and allowed to flourish.

Many of these issues have been discussed over the past few years in different formats. Occasionally, there have been agreements reached, but never implemented. It is time that matters were clarified. Any form of understanding on the matter of Kosovo has as a conditio sine qua non the explicit negotiated and guaranteed agreement on the following matters essential to the protection of Serbs in Kosovo.

The first concerns the status of the Serbian population in North Kosovo. All acknowledge that this is an issue that must be addressed on the basis of the current realities. Attempts to change the current realities would not be conducive to constructive solutions.

The second issue involves the proper implementation of decentralization in Kosovo. All those enclaves that are isolated from other Serbs must have a political, judicial and economic life providing the standards that allow them to prosper where they are. Serbia remains ready to continue to provide the necessary support to these threatened populations.

The third issue is that of the status of the Serbian Orthodox Church and of some of its key holy sites. The protection of those sites and the special status that must be given to them to preserve their unique identity and their livelihoods is a matter of fundamental concern. It comes as a matter of surprise to me that an offer that would be acceptable to the Republic of Serbia and the Serbian Orthodox Church has not been volunteered by the other side. That issue is one of the most basic, and its denial should be considered a total embarrassment to the authorities in Pristina and the supervisory institutions and nations present in Kosovo.

Finally, the question of property must be resolved. Thousands of private claims remain pending, making hostages of those internally displaced in 1999. Commercial property claims are unresolved, as well.

The failure to advance with goodwill on the very issue that is at the core of our concerns — the rights of the Serbian communities in Kosovo — is very disturbing. For us, those four issues are the litmus test.

There is so much to say about the progress in my country that is positive that it always saddens me that I must repeat my concerns about the way in which the

issue of Kosovo is being handled. Let us all recall that Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) placed Kosovo under the interim administration of the United Nations, pending a comprehensive settlement endorsed by the Security Council. There is a limit to what and for how long Serbia must be held accountable for developments where it is asked to assume responsibility, but without the necessary authority.

I look forward to the day when I can stand at this rostrum and report that we have resolved that issue and that we have found a mutually acceptable compromise, not an imposed outcome where one side gets everything that it has ever wanted and the other side gets nothing. A maximalist zero-sum approach is a solution with no future. We are ready. We are committed. It is for others to provide grounds for optimism.

The Republic of Serbia has two immediate parallel objectives: to secure a mutually acceptable arrangement in Kosovo that provides iron-clad guarantees for the Serbian communities and to accelerate our progress to membership of the European Union. Both those objectives are achievable. It would be foolish for anyone to think that one objective will be sacrificed on the altar of the other. It is for others to decide whether they think that the achievement of those two objectives is for the good of the region and for stability. We are convinced that it is in everyone's interest.

I believe that Serbia has met the criteria to be invited to be a candidate for membership of the European Union. I also believe that my country is ready to start accession negotiations. I believe that if that were to occur, Serbia would, for the first time in 20 years, begin to believe that the EU actually sees Serbia as an integral part of a complete European Union.

I fervently believe that my country has set an example in the region in matters related to reconciliation, the establishment of the rule of law and the fight against organized crime, as well as in building the administrative capacity to handle European norms.

Our battle against organized crime is a global one. We know that international organized crime wants to use the region of South-East Europe as a base to penetrate the EU. The Republic of Serbia has decided that it is a strategic priority and a national security priority that Serbia will help prevent that. Serbia is therefore fighting a battle to protect citizens of the European Union. It is actively engaged in a wider strategy to destroy the links between organized crime and international terrorism. We cooperate with all nations that share those objectives. We appeal to the entire region to join us in that battle.

I am therefore convinced that the presence of Serbia as a candidate, actively negotiating its accession, is an important asset for the European Union.

In that way, Serbia can continue to be an even more effective member of the United Nations, contributing fully and enthusiastically to the issues that touch common humanity.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Serbia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guinea.

Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Condé (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me to address the General Assembly as the first democratically elected President in the history of my country since its independence, following a free, transparent and credible election whose result was accepted by all. My country paid a high price for the dawn of democracy, to which I have devoted almost 50 years of my life.

Today, Guinea has turned an important page in its history. I would like to take this opportunity to express the people of Guinea's gratitude to the international

community, in particular the International Contact Group on Guinea, for their untiring efforts in the context of my country's return to constitutional normality. To those thanks, I add my brother and friend President Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, who, as mediator in the Guinean crisis, spared no effort to restore constitutional order in Guinea.

My presence in this Hall, which says much about the history of peoples and nations, represents Guinea's return to the international stage. This is the place for me to assure the international community of my Government's commitment to respect and promote human rights, strengthen unity and national harmony, build a democratic society and ensure the progress and prosperity of the Guinean people.

The challenges to be addressed are many and complex. The socio-economic situation that we inherited was hardly bright: an utterly failed economy with the resulting inflation, corruption and a completely dysfunctional State.

The outcome of the presidential election in November 2010 therefore expressed the legitimate aspiration of the people of Guinea to profound change that would foster the economic and social development of the country. That thirst for change is also justified by the considerable backwardness evident in our country despite its considerable human and natural resources. That is why, the day after the presidential election, we committed without delay to a series of remedial measures in order to provide the way for better governance in the country.

Strategies and dynamic policies were drawn up and implemented to improve people's living conditions. Among the reforms pledged, the Government grants agriculture priority in order to achieve food self-sufficiency. Likewise, the mining sector is being reorganized through the adoption of a new more attractive policy that takes into account the interests of Guinea and its partners.

As part of that momentum for change, actions continue for the modernization and restructuring of the judicial system in order to ensure the promotion and protection of citizens' rights and freedoms and to establish an attractive investment climate.

On the financial level, reform will make it possible to control inflation, prevent the misappropriation of public funds and avoid having to print money, as well as allow us to combat poor governance, impunity and corruption. Strict management measures, such as the State one-stop shop, strengthening economic oversight and the overhaul of the administration, as well as undertaking audits, will stop financial losses and correct malfunctions.

Apart from the steps to improve macroeconomic management and the structural reforms that I have just described, the Government has drawn up poverty reduction strategies to meet the population's basic needs for income and access to basic social services, in particular drinking water and power supplies. Sustainable development being a major goal of the Government, it is clear that the health-care, education and environment sectors are among our Government's priorities.

However, that ambitious programme to combat underdevelopment and poverty cannot be fully accomplished without the ongoing and effective support of the international community. Moreover, negotiations are under way with the Bretton Woods institutions on the signing of an agreement, which is almost complete, on the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative to considerably reduce the Guinean debt. That will enable us to free up considerable financial resources and devote them to the sustainable development of our country.

I wish to acknowledge our deep appreciation for, and to renew our faith in, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank for the efforts already agreed on implementing our development strategy. I would also like to take this opportunity to express the Guinean people's gratitude to all bilateral, regional and multilateral development partners for their valuable contribution to the national development effort.

National reconciliation remains the cornerstone of our action. My approach in that process is to directly involve the population at the grassroots. In that context, I set up a provisional commission of reflection, co-chaired by the Grand Imam and the Archbishop of Conakry. That commission will work with the wise men of the regions and prefectures on the ways and means to bolster national unity for a genuine reconciliation.

As a component of the nation, the army is among our priorities. The reforms seek to make it a truly

republican institution — guardian of peace, security and development.

Women and young people are key stakeholders in our socio-economic development. Those sectors of society receive my Government's constant attention. In that regard, the empowerment of young people and women is another important factor.

Following the presidential election, the people of Guinea are now working to prepare legislative elections, which will enshrine the return to constitutional order. In that context, we decided to establish a secure computerized electoral roll that will make it possible to correct the anomalies noted during the presidential election and to ensure the participation of all Guineans of voting age in the election.

The Millennium Summit, held in New York in 2000, committed itself in an ambitious declaration to reduce extreme poverty by 2015 (see resolution 55/2). Despite several meetings, strategies drawn up at the State level and the participation of the international community, in particular through the Monterrey Consensus, the Rome summit on food security, the Johannesburg summit on sustainable development and the Beijing summit on social development, many challenges are still to be addressed.

We therefore need to periodically assess the direction of the supporting measures to ensure that the lofty goals that have been set are met. That approach is shared by external partners, political parties, civil society, unions and other actors.

Despite the international community's repeated calls for peace, areas of conflict and tension continue in several regions of the world, in particular in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. The occupation of Palestinian land by the State of Israel is an ongoing concern. The Palestinian people must exercise their legitimate and inalienable rights, including the right of return to their lands and the right to establish an independent State, within the borders established before June 1967, in peace and security alongside the State of Israel. That principled path alone could lead to a comprehensive and lasting peace, which is a guarantee for all countries in the region, including Israel.

The advent of a stable climate in Côte d'Ivoire, a brother country and neighbour, is reassuring after years of fratricidal clashes.

My delegation welcomes the entry of the Republic of South Sudan into the body of free nations.

The tragic humanitarian situation prevailing in the Horn of Africa is a source of serious concern. The efforts of the United Nations, the African Union and humanitarian organizations and institutions currently under way to provide assistance and protection to populations in distress must continue. The adoption of a comprehensive regional plan for food security and self-sufficiency would provide a lasting solution to the current crisis. However, Guinea attaches great importance to the positive settlement of the fratricidal conflict in Somalia.

The Republic of Guinea has always participated in the collective effort to promote international peace and security, and it seeks to strengthen its role in that area. Indeed, my delegation believes that mediation is the most effective tool for the prevention and settlement of conflicts and for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is clear that States must create the domestic conditions to prevent and settle disputes with the support of the United Nations.

In addition, subregional, regional and international organizations must adopt mediation mechanisms, while working closely with other actors, such as civil society and youth and women's organizations. In the particular case of Africa, my delegation would hope that priority be given to African mediation mechanisms, whose action has shown to be effective on several occasions.

Given the relevance of the central theme of the current session, the Guinean delegation hopes that our debates will further strengthen the role and action of our universal Organization. The United Nations is the crucible of our aspirations and the mirror of our collective vision and our joint fight for improved well-being and peace. To that end, it must pursue in-depth reforms of its structures, operation and decision-taking mechanisms so as to be more effective and credible.

I wish to reaffirm the joint African position agreed at Ezulwini for fairer representation on the Security Council. In that regard, Guinea will continue to support the action of the Secretary-General, whose re-election fills us with great joy. We are convinced that the new mandate will enable him to continue and to strengthen his efforts towards achieving the noble ideals enshrined in the Charter.

I could not finish without conveying my congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election as President of the General Assembly at the sixty-sixth ordinary session. I wish him every success in carrying out his difficult task. To his predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss, I would like to express our gratitude for his excellent work during his term.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Isaias Afwerki, President of the State of Eritrea

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the State of Eritrea.

Mr. Isaias Afwerki, President of the State of Eritrea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Isaias Afwerki, President of the State of Eritrea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Afwerki: Allow me begin by congratulating the President of the General Assembly and his country, Qatar, on his election to preside over the Assembly at this session, and by thanking Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his leadership and achievements.

We gather at the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly at an important juncture in the history of the world. We meet at a time of exciting possibilities and opportunities for the betterment of hundreds of millions of people. Yet, these favourable prospects must be weighed against the profound dangers and sense of anxiety that currently grip our world. The persistent economic and financial crisis, massive unemployment, growing inequality between and within nations, spiralling levels of debt, recurrent famines and starvation, high levels of mortality from easily preventable diseases and an increasingly fragile environment are wreaking havoc on the lives of people and the future of nations. Despite the end of the Cold War and the premature declaration of the emergence of a new world order, wars and military interventions continue — almost invariably failing to resolve, and further complicating, the problems they set out to solve.

It is true that none of these problems are new, yet there is no denying that the malaise seems much more intractable today. Three years ago, the world was infused by a renewed spirit of hope and possibility with the historic election of President Barack Obama and the freshness of his message of positive change. However, in spite his best efforts, the strength of his personality and his many talents, that hope has not been realized. The reality is that the problems we face are systemic, were accumulated over many years and decades, and require systemic and structural change. Effecting this real, positive and durable transformation requires not only the effort of one leader and one nation and its allies, but the concerted effort of all nations. We look towards the emerging and re-emerging Powers — China, India, Russia, Brazil and others — to show more leadership and to shoulder bigger responsibilities. We also believe that all nations, whatever their size, can and should play an increasingly bigger and effective role in the endeavour to build a fair, just, equitable and sustainable world.

This year has seen stirring and courageous initiatives taken by the people of many nations to effect fundamental changes that would lead to a new and dignified beginning for them and their countries. While the epicentre of the movement has been in North Africa and the Middle East, it is not limited to the Arab world or to developing nations. In much of the developed world, there is now the same sense of anger and frustration, the same discontent with Governments that have become beholden to a small minority with special interests and the same yearning for decent jobs, meaningful political participation and dignified lives. These realities cannot, and should not, be denied. Clearly, this is not the time for complacency or arrogance. What is required today is a frank acknowledgement of the stark global reality we face, and the readiness to empower our peoples and our youth and to work cooperatively for a secure and brighter future for all.

As we ponder the future and take stock of the sweeping changes that are under way, we cannot fail to

underscore that the United Nations has already become hopelessly outdated and risks becoming totally irrelevant. We all profess agreement on the need to transform the institutions and procedures of the United Nations, but we remain paralysed, with no prospects for early progress.

Eritrea firmly associates itself with those who stress the urgency of real reform and believes that what is required is not a mere tweaking of the system but a comprehensive transformation of the institution. The critical element of this transformation has to be the strengthening of the authority and role of the General Assembly. As long as this paramount body is deprived of real decision-making powers, the United Nations will remain unrepresentative of the nations of the world, even if the size and composition of the Security Council changes significantly. Similarly, there can be no meaningful revitalization without overhauling the methods of work and procedures of the United Nations, respecting the rights of Member States and ensuring transparency and accountability in all bodies of the Organization.

Half a century has elapsed since the heyday of the era of decolonization that led to the emergence of independent African nations. In spite the hope and enthusiasm of the early years and the achievements registered since, the past five decades have been largely disappointing. The trying times and the internal and external challenges that caused them are certainly not over, as Africa continues to struggle in a difficult and complex international environment. Yet, without exaggerating the possibilities or underestimating the difficulties, it is clear that a number of African countries are entering a period of political, economic and social renewal. They are convinced that Africa has the human and natural resources to succeed. It will not shun international partnerships but will give primacy to its own capabilities and to cooperation at the continental and subregional levels. It is this perspective that is spurring African countries to focus on the key requirements of developing the continent's infrastructure and promoting trade and economic links among themselves. Another key component is the revitalization of the African Union and subregional organizations.

At the subregional level, Eritrea is committed to economic development and integration in the wider Horn of Africa and Red Sea regions. We are convinced that no country can succeed in a turbulent environment. We will work for the revitalization of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and strive to make it effective in promoting economic development and integration.

We welcome an independent South Sudan and will work with both the Sudan and South Sudan, with whom we have long-standing ties, as they grapple with their domestic situations and endeavour to build cooperative relations.

On Somalia, it has now become abundantly clear that there is a need for a new approach, as the current one has exhausted itself and can only lead to further complications. Given that the central objective remains the reconstitution of Somalia and the rebuilding of effective institutions, it is imperative to seriously engage and bring into a Somali-owned political process all stakeholders, including the Governments of Somaliland and Puntland.

With regard to the Middle East, which is a key item on the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly, Eritrea reaffirms its long-standing support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and an independent, sovereign State. It also upholds the right of Israel to live in peace and security within internationally recognized boundaries. At the same time, Eritrea is genuinely concerned that the current drive for United Nations membership for Palestine does not become a symbolic battle bereft of real substance. It is only prudent and relevant to recall that with the exception of a few realistic voices, the Oslo Accords were greeted with much acclaim and that, almost two decades later, they have not led to either Palestinian Statehood or peace between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

Finally, I would be remiss in my duty if I did not remind the United Nations of its responsibility to uphold its Charter, international law and numerous Security Council resolutions and take urgent action to end Ethiopia's occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory. Coupled with the lifting of the illegal sanctions on Eritrea, that would not only serve the cause of justice, but it would enable the people of the region to work together to further their collective interests and consolidate Africa's place in the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the State of Eritrea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Isaias Afwerki, President of the State of Eritrea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Marcus Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nauru.

Mr. Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Marcus Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Stephen: Allow me to congratulate Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. Allow me also to commend his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, for his capable leadership during the sixty-fifth session.

I would like to begin my statement by thanking Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his historic visit to Kiribati and Solomon Islands earlier this month. That was the first time that a sitting Secretary-General visited a Pacific island country, and it demonstrates his commitment to addressing the needs of all countries, no matter how small or remote. From my conversations with the Secretary-General, I know he left the region with a much clearer understanding of the special challenges we face as small island nations. I look forward to working with the Secretary-General on finding ways for the United Nations system to be more responsive to the unique and particular needs of small island developing States (SIDS).

While on his tour of the Pacific, the Secretary-General observed that

> "Next month, the 7 billionth citizen of our world will be born. For that child, and for all of us, we must keep working to fight poverty, create decent jobs and provide a dignified life while preserving the planet that sustains us. That is why I have said that the sustainable development agenda is the agenda for the twenty-first century". (*see SG/SM/13780*)

Sustainable development and poverty alleviation have been the overriding priorities of my presidency since I assumed office, in 2007. We have made great strides domestically, but we will still fall short of our ambitious goals until the international community chooses to create an environment in which all countries have the opportunity to realize their sustainable development aspirations.

Nauru's culture and economy, like those of most Pacific SIDS, are heavily dependent on a healthy and productive marine environment. The ocean is the foundation of our food security and is a major source of Government revenue. It is for that reason that the Pacific SIDS are calling for the next Earth Summit in Rio to recognize the importance of the "blue economy" to small island and coastal States. I would like to thank Maldives, Australia and New Zealand, as well as the Secretary-General, for standing with the Pacific SIDS on this issue.

We have identified three priority areas for the Rio+20 outcome. First, we must enable SIDS to enjoy a greater share of the economic benefits derived from their marine and coastal resources. Secondly, we must reduce, and eventually eliminate, overfishing and destructive fishing practices. It is imperative that we ensure that our fisheries are sustainable. Finally, we must build up the resilience of coral reef ecosystems to the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification. Adopting our proposals would begin to create the space needed for small islands to thrive.

My Government is not sitting still while it waits for the international community to act. This past summer, Nauru's application to the International Seabed Authority was granted, which will enable my country to engage in new and innovative ways to generate economic growth and move towards aid independence. Nauru is not endowed with terrestrial resources, and therefore has chosen to look to the oceans to expand its opportunities for economic and social development.

The proceeds from our exploration and development of copper, nickel and manganese resources will go to two fully Nauruan-owned funds, one that supports education and training, and the other, health and environment. This Nauru-controlled, domestically driven initiative will adhere to the highest international environmental standards.

The sustainable development challenges of SIDS are widely recognized by the international community; however, our success in addressing them has been mixed at best. At last year's High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, it was determined that progress for most Pacific islands had been lagging in many areas. Targeted assistance to address the unique and particular vulnerabilities of SIDS is urgently needed. It is Nauru's position that the most effective way to accomplish this objective is for the United Nations to recognize a formal SIDS category, with dedicated support mechanisms.

Unfortunately, all of our best efforts will have been for naught if we do not take immediate action to address climate change. As Pacific island leaders recognized earlier this month, climate change represents the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific.

The seventeenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Durban, must make significant progress towards a comprehensive, legally binding agreement that can ensure the survival of all nations. The parties must agree to a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol, so that new commitments are in place by 2013. The parties must also operationalize the agreements reached at Cancún, including more ambitious mitigation commitments and actions, the operationalization of the new Green Climate Fund, and a mandate to conclude a new legally binding agreement based on the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action.

Climate change threatens to undo all of our recent development gains if the major biggest polluters continue down the path of business as usual. Some Pacific islands may disappear entirely. It is an unfortunate reality that there is so much carbon in the atmosphere that many of the negative impacts of climate change may now be unavoidable. For that reason, Nauru applauds the recent open debate in the Security Council on climate change. While the final presidential statement was not as strong as we had hoped, it clearly recognizes the threat posed by climate change to international peace and security and lays the foundation for future work by the Council on the issue.

Few countries doubt the connection between climate change and security, but there is still disagreement as to the way forward. Allow me to reiterate the proposals of the Pacific SIDS.

First, the Secretary-General should appoint a special representative on climate and security to analyse the projected security impacts of climate change, so that the Council and Member States can better understand what lies ahead. Secondly, the Secretary-General should assess the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to the likely security impacts of climate change, so that vulnerable countries can be assured that it is up to the task. These two proposals represent the absolute minimum necessary to prepare for the greatest threat to international peace and security of our generation.

The Security Council must grapple with the most urgent security threats of our time if it is to remain relevant. Likewise, it should evolve along with emerging geopolitical realities and become more representative and inclusive. It is for this reason that Nauru supports an early reform of the Security Council through an enlargement of both the permanent and non-permanent categories and an improvement in its working methods.

We believe very strongly that new members should be geographically diverse. However, it is equally important that aspiring members demonstrate their commitment to addressing the most urgent security issues facing all Member States. As an example, I would like to highlight Germany's bold leadership of the Security Council this past July, when it took the politically courageous decision to host the open debate on climate change. As I said earlier, climate change is the overriding security threat facing the Pacific region, and Germany's efforts will not be forgotten.

In a similar vein, the United Nations should ensure that all citizens of the world have the opportunity to participate in its activities. We cannot continue to ignore the more than 23 million people who live in Taiwan, who have repeatedly demonstrated that they are a nation committed to peace and regional cooperation. We therefore support enabling Taiwan's meaningful engagement in connection with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the International Civil Aviation Organization.

The recent renaming of the Group of Asian States, to the Group of Asia and the Pacific Small Island Developing States, is a welcome change that

exemplifies the inclusivity that should characterize all aspects of the United Nations system. I commend the Group for having taken this symbolic step and recognizing the 20 per cent of the membership that resides in the Pacific Ocean region.

However, we must move beyond symbolism to concrete action that addresses the actual concerns of small and vulnerable countries. Once again, I implore the Assembly to support the appointment of a special representative on climate and security for the benefit of the many nations around the world for whom climate change is a grave and, in some cases, existential threat.

My Government is preparing for a new challenge. In 2012, Nauru will assume the chairmanship of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). I would like to recognize the Government of Grenada for its inspirational leadership and able execution of a supremely difficult task.

I am humbled by the trust placed in us by our fellow AOSIS colleagues and have no illusions regarding the enormity of the challenges that lie ahead. We are entering a period in history when countries are turning inward, despite decades of evidence that cooperation is the surest path to prosperity. We must resist the urge to engage in zero-sum politics and recommit to the principles of multilateralism enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Durban will be the next opportunity to embark on a more sustainable path and create a world we are proud to leave for future generations. We should not let this opportunity slip away.

For years, leaders in the Pacific have implored the peoples of the world to come to our islands and see the impacts of climate change for themselves. The Secretary-General answered our call, and now he truly understands the urgency of our situation.

Earlier this week, he spoke of a little girl named Tamauri he met while in Kiribati (see A/66/PV.11). Frightened by the rising tides around her islands, she asked what the United Nations could do to help her people. She is not alone. The children in all of our countries — Cook Islands, Fiji, Micronesia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Marshall Islands, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own, Nauru — wonder whether they will have a future. I look forward to working with the Secretary-General to meet the challenge of the climate crisis so that we can tell them that they no longer need to be afraid. May God bless the Republic of Nauru and may God bless the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nauru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Marcus Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of the Niger

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Niger.

Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of the Niger, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of the Niger, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Issoufou (*spoke in French*):

> "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (*The Holy Bible, Isaiah 2:4*)

Far from achieving Isaiah's prophecy, humankind continues to face serious challenges at this time when His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss has passed the baton to the new President after presiding brilliantly over the General Assembly at its previous session. I have no doubt that on his election to the presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, the President brings to it great strengths, bolstered in particular with the understanding and mastery of international realities he has acquired as, among other positions, Permanent Representative of his country, and having sat on the Security Council during Qatar's non-permanent membership.

The President did well in choosing as the theme for his term "The role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes". Under the guidance of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, sustained efforts have been made in this area. Here I would like to pay tribute

to him for the work he has done during his first term and to congratulate him on his re-election on 21 June as head of the Organization. I would also like once again to thank him for the Organization's unfailing support during the multiple crises that my country, Niger, has undergone in recent years. More generally, we have seen his commitment to the concerns of the African continent and hope that his new term will enable him to continue on the same path.

The choice of theme for the current session is proof that the prophecy of Isaiah, whose verse is rightly engraved in front of the United Nations building, has been slow to become reality. Indeed, the international situation has been and continues to be characterized by serious tensions. We might have thought that the end of the cold war would open the way to an age of full and lasting peace around the world. Unfortunately, owing to a lack of the ability or perhaps even the will to attack the evil at the root, our hope for a world free of conflict, like the line of the horizon, recedes as we approach it.

The root of the evil is bad political and economic governance. The promises of freedom, equality, justice, the rule of law and solidarity that have been made to the people of the world at the global and the national levels have not always been kept. The absence of global economic regulation, the domination of financial capital over even the real economy, the growth of inequalities between and within nations are just so many factors in the chaos, crises and conflicts that are disturbing peace around the world. Besides, can a world where several billion people live in poverty be peaceful? What do the billion human beings who are hungry have to lose? Can the Somalis, who are suffering the tortures of hunger right now, or the inhabitants of the Sahel, who deal with hunger over and over again, believe that they live in a just, humane world? Can extreme poverty coexist peacefully with extreme wealth?

Today, 1,210 people, that is, 17 per 100 million of the world's population, control revenues of $4,500 billion — 8 per cent of the world's aggregate gross domestic product (GDP) — while the income of 20 per cent of the poorest represents only 1.5 per cent, and that of the 2.5 billion people who live on less than $2 a day — 40 per cent of the total population — represents only 5 per cent. Thus a thousand or so people have an income one and a half times larger than all the 2.5 billion people living on less than $2 a day. Besides being morally shocking, this situation is economically inefficient, since it strangles economic growth. Furthermore, the implementation of structural adjustment programmes that began in the 1980s is a perfect illustration of bad global economic governance. The liberalization and privatization touted by such programmes were conducted anarchically; even today, such liberalization has been applied only in sectors where weak countries such as ours have no relative advantages. As we know, such liberalization did not affect the markets for labour or agricultural products. My country, Niger, has suffered greatly from such policies.

This is, finally, where we should recall that the promise made by the world's wealthy nations, beginning in the 1970s, to increase their public development aid to 0.7 per cent of GDP has still not been kept. If you add to that the recent crises in banking and sovereign debt, along with the shortfall in direct investment in Africa, where there is nonetheless great scope for economic growth, you can understand the inadequacy of global economic growth, particularly the collapse of economic growth in wealthy countries. The economic elasticity and resilience we need to cope with the crises will grow only with the development of the countries of the South. The world's equilibrium depends on the balanced development of all its regions; in particular, the creation of a powerful middle class in every region of the world will strengthen economic growth, stability and peace.

For more than 60 years, the Middle East has been one of the most turbulent regions on the planet. We had great hopes for the resumption on 9 May 2010 of indirect negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians, mediated by the United Nations. The start of direct bilateral negotiations represented real hope for reaching a global peace agreement based on a two-State solution, with an independent and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its neighbours.

It is undoubtedly the failure of those talks that has led the Palestinian Authority to take steps to achieve recognition of the State of Palestine based, on the one hand, on the 1967 borders, and on the other, on its admission as a full Member of the United Nations. This is the moment for our Organization to take a bold decision designed to settle the Israel-Palestinian problem definitively, a settlement without which the Arab Spring will be unable to guarantee peace and

security in the entire Middle East. Indeed, the failure of democracies to resolve this long-standing crisis will inevitably reinforce terrorism and will erase the democratic achievements of the Spring.

My country, Niger, one of the 122 Member States that have already recognized the State of Palestine, is supporting its request for full membership in the United Nations, as presented this morning at this sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

The tenth anniversary of the terrorist attacks against the United States, commemorated last 11 September, and the recent suicide attack against the United Nations headquarters in Abuja in Nigeria prove that no region of the world is safe from terrorism. We firmly condemn all acts of terrorism, wherever, for whatever reason and by whomever they are committed, as they present one of the most serious threats to peace and security.

Terrorism, as the Assembly knows, attacks the values that constitute the essence of the United Nations Charter: respect for human rights, the rule of law, the rules governing war and the protection of civilians, tolerance among peoples and nations and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

In Niger, we face this threat on our northern border with Algeria, to the west with Mali and to the south with Nigeria. I would like to pay a well-deserved tribute to the Nigerian security and defence forces, some of whom have given their lives in their commitment to protecting our country from terrorism.

Along with that threat, of course, we also have to face criminal organizations that traffic in weapons, drugs and human beings. All of these threats have been exacerbated by the Libyan crisis. Indeed, arms depots have been pillaged in Libya. Those weapons are now distributed throughout the Sahara and Sahel area and risk ending up in the hands of terrorists. Given the regional nature of the threats, Niger is determined to work jointly with other countries, especially in our subregion, to deal with the situation. The risk to the stability of the entire subregion, where some countries experience recurrent rebellions, should not be underestimated.

We hope that there will be a rapid solution to the crisis, which would not just have a security impact on Niger, but also an economic and social impact, given the work stoppage on the road construction that was being financed by Libya, the return from Libya of over 210,000 migrant Niger nationals and the arrival of increasing numbers of Libyan refugees fleeing the war. Niger is a democratic country, governed by the rule of law, and we will treat these refugees in compliance with our laws and international law. Until now, our country, with very limited means, has been bearing this terrible burden alone. Our country therefore requires support and help from the international community in terms of both the security and the economic issues, as we are on the frontlines of the war against terrorism.

Niger would also like to see a rapid return to peace and stability in this brotherly country and reconciliation among Libyans. We are concerned by the situation, because the democratic institutions that our countries are trying to build are still fragile. We are concerned because the reality of widespread poverty provides a breeding ground for terrorism.

My country, Niger, believes that, apart from immediate security solutions, the strengthening of democratic institutions and economic and social development are the only ways to confine terrorism and guarantee peace. Democratic values are universal. It has been decisively proven: there is no such thing as climate determinism, which would condemn hot countries to despotism and temperate countries to democracy. In understanding this, the world has made a quantum leap, convincing even those who would believe that the fight for democracy is simply a new version of the mission to civilize, which was the justification for the colonialism of the past century brought about by the alliance of the sword and the censer.

As a Muslim, I would like to say that terrorism has nothing to do with Islam. Islam has always emphasized fraternity and justice. It has always emphasized the intrinsic unity of all human beings and their equality, whatever their origins. Islam therefore proclaims that all men are equal like the teeth of a comb in the hands of a weaver. Islam is a religion of tolerance.

> "I do not serve that which you serve, nor do you serve Him Whom I serve: nor am I going to serve that which you serve, nor are you going to serve Him Whom I serve: you shall have your religion and I shall have my religion." (*The Holy Koran, CIX: 2-6*)

Those are the divine words, full of tolerance, from a sura of the Koran. Thus, terrorism has nothing to do with Islam, with real Islam, which is a religion of the happy medium, and the fight against terrorism should not be considered a religious conflict, a clash between two civilizations, a struggle between Judeo-Christian civilization and Muslim civilization, or a fight to the death between the Christian West and the Muslim East. The world must not return to the religious wars of the Middle Ages. Quite the opposite, it should be able to integrate the values of two civilizations that are, at their root, both from the same area, the Middle East.

Climate change is another challenge that the world is facing. Greenhouse gases are one of its causes. The least developed poor countries, of which Niger is unfortunately a member, only produce 1 per cent of those gases. We in Niger suffer from the effects of climate change on a recurring basis. Indeed, our people live off of subsistence agriculture and livestock-raising. Those two sectors, on which the poorest, in particular women and children, rely, are very vulnerable to climate change. The droughts and floods in Niger over the past 10 years show, needless to say, a trend towards a growing number of extreme weather events.

In view of this, we decided to implement the Three Ns initiative, that is, "the people of Niger Nourishing the people of Niger". As we believe that drought does not need to necessarily bring about famine, we have decided to increase the yields of rain-fed agriculture, to promote irrigation, to modernize livestock-raising methods and to implement a robust policy of environmental protection. As we know that the harvest this season will be poor, we have decided to implement an emergency irrigation programme, to rebuild our food stocks and to alert the international community to the situation. From this rostrum I renew my country's appeal to the international community for aid for Niger, which, in addition to threats from the Libyan crisis, from terrorists and from criminal organizations of every kind, is also facing severe food insecurity.

The terrible recurrent drought that Niger lives with spurred our decision to restructure our economy. Our country has significant mineral resources — uranium, gold, coal, cement, which are already being mined, as well as oil, the first barrel of which will be produced before the end of 2011. While the curse of mineral resources has had unfortunate results in other countries, we will exploit our resources to the sole benefit of the people of Niger. In accordance with the Extraction Industries Transparency Initiative, we mean to invest the profits to the benefit of the people of Niger, especially in agriculture, animal husbandry, energy and transportation infrastructure, education, health and access to water. The resulting boost to our economy will allow us to create tens of thousands of jobs, especially for young people. Niger encourages private investment, especially foreign direct investment. Besides the legal protection we offer by promoting the rule of law, we have also just adopted a law on public-private partnerships in order to expedite funding.

We have the duty to create a fairer and more humane world. To achieve that noble aim we need new global governance. That will require a profound reform of international organizations, in particular the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The democratization of those institutions is absolutely necessary; it is a sine qua non condition for peace and stability in the world. For decisions to be accepted and implemented by everyone, they must be taken in a collaborative, participatory way.

I would like to focus now on our great Organization. The United Nations is at once a permanent space for political dialogue among the countries we represent and a forum for the expression of the solidarity necessary among our peoples. It is also where we turn for the realization of our hopes. For all those reasons, reform of the United Nations must proceed faster. Africa takes a common position on this issue, which my country shares. We deeply believe that, given its worldwide mandate to deal with major issues like peace, security, development and human rights, the United Nations must be fair, representative and democratic. We believe in an ongoing revitalization of the General Assembly, the common forum that we all hold dear. We have no doubt that the President of the Assembly will move forward the process of democratizing the United Nations. The same is true of reform of the Security Council, which we all await and which Africa has always called for, through its representatives, especially the Committee of Ten African Ministers of Finance and Central Bank Governors.

Before concluding, I want to return to the theme of mediation. Our countries and the United Nations itself could increase their effectiveness in managing issues of peace, security and development if they sought resolution through mediation. The importance of the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes is incontestable. In fact, it is an essential tool in the peaceful settlement of disputes, which the Charter itself recommends to States in Article 33.

In Niger we have experienced the benefits of mediation, through the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, in our recent political and institutional crisis. It is true that mediation can be tedious, but in the end it bears fruit. We endorse every effort that aims to promote peace through mediation, both in active and potential conflicts. We also encourage the Department of Political Affairs to keep the principle in mind in its work.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Niger for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of Niger, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Martelly (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to congratulate Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I also want to use this occasion to commend the leadership of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and to laud the dynamism and wisdom he brings to the management of world affairs.

From this rostrum, I extend a brotherly welcome to our sister nation, South Sudan, which just proclaimed its independence on 9 July. We share in their pride, and we welcome them with great respect as the 193rd Member State of the great family of the United Nations. On behalf of the Republic of Haiti, I send warm congratulations and our hope that the country may enjoy peace, happiness and prosperity. I honour the memory of those who died in the struggle before seeing the dawn of a new day shining in that part of the African continent.

Speaking here today on behalf of Haiti, I join my voice with those of all the Member States that, like us, have known the heavy burden of post-disaster and post-conflict circumstances, in saying that even among the weakest and most vulnerable hope lives on. They carry the hope of rebirth, because they know that the pre-crisis reality is no longer a possibility. They know that change — change in their mentality and change in their political, economic and social affairs — must be their creed. They cannot afford not to change. In the case of Haiti, it is precisely because an entire people were firmly convinced of the need for change that I was elected with a very clear mandate, namely, that of bringing about that change.

I am convinced that that leap in awareness that resulted from suffering is what will lead to a new global order. That was the case at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Saint-Domingue broke its chains and brought about the birth of Haiti. It was the case in 1945, when countries of good will, including Haiti, came together to bring about this body which brings us together this week around noble ideals. It also seems to be the case in the light of the political changes affecting North Africa.

In a country of the South where the human development index is still of concern, a major disaster unfortunately arises, the great question of responsibility comes brutally to the fore again, whether the responsibility be local in terms of governance, or whether the responsibility lies with the global order. Today's world and the United Nations in particular will be more and more called upon, because those post-disaster situations include both situations resulting from natural disasters and those of a passing nature or those that are simply caused by human folly.

When on top of that, in some of those cases, all of these factors come together, the response must be

more carefully designed, more responsible, more coordinated, bolder and more determined.

I strongly believe that, first of all, it is for the affected countries to seek and find solutions, because any solution that is imposed from the outside, however generous it might be, will, in the medium term, only produce adverse effects. It is up to the people of the South to determine how they use their wealth, their raw materials and their future. In the case of Haiti, I have to say that the international community, through the United Nations, showed by supporting, six months after the earthquake, presidential elections in a difficult context, that it understood the urgency. I would like to thank it for that.

But I also strongly believe that it would be irresponsible for a country that has been hit by disaster to deny itself the assistance, expertise and cooperation of sisterly nations, whether they be from the emerging South or from the North, which is supposedly well-off.

It is that balance, as I was saying, between mature governance and well-conceived international assistance that should be sought after and codified, genuinely and without any embellishment. I would cite as an example the various peacekeeping and stabilization missions of the United Nations in numerous places around the globe, including Haiti.

The same situation arises everywhere: a country initially welcomes the missions, but in the medium term, they lose steam. Why? Problems arise because the expectations of the host country are excessive. Furthermore, missions cannot operate when they work under inflexible terms of reference. That is to be regretted, because nothing would more irresponsible and dangerous than to let missions leave before an effective national alternative is in place.

In the case of Haiti, what would the United Nations Mission have accomplished if today, suddenly and without any warning, it were to be withdrawn? Of course, I am aware of the fact that unacceptable errors have been committed and have affected the prestige of the Mission, but the trees must not be allowed to hide the forest. I believe that political stabilization goes through a number of stages. It cannot be based simply on an intervention force or a more or less neutral observer presence. That would reflect a very simplified view of the primary role of the United Nations. Stabilization is more than that. Thus, the Government policy that I stand for consists of four main pillars: education, employment, environment and the rule of law.

How can we build peace unless there is universal and free basic education in a country where there is massive illiteracy? How can we promote sustainable development without high quality education that promotes citizen values, ensures gender equality, values cultural identity and openness to the world, and leads to tolerance?

With respect to jobs, allow me to say that we can talk as much as we like about human dignity and human rights, and about stabilization and peace, but an empty stomach is deaf to words. It is by creating decent jobs that are properly paid and that respect the rights of vulnerable categories of people that justice begins. It is by a fair distribution of the income from raw materials that we will stop smothering the countries of the South and put an end to the speculation that undermines democracy.

On these major themes, nations must come together and come still closer together. They must be committed to combating deforestation and climate change. We must also seriously take into account the problem of water. There will be no peace in the world as long as the living conditions of countries such as mine are so poor that they lead to natural disasters becoming even more tragic, floods even worse, drought even more deadly and the rural exodus even more widespread.

Stabilization today also means, above all, establishing the rule of law, but the rule of law requires, inter alia, an independent, responsible and strong justice system. It also means the ongoing and difficult but necessary establishment of strong institutions that are stronger than privilege and group interest.

The world will become more beautiful when we stop talking about condemning or accusing people. Haiti has been witness to that fact. But Haiti can also say that in post-disaster assistance, the disbursement of funds that are not subject to inflexible, complex and clumsy red tape are those that are best adapted to needs. Therefore, those procedures, even if they are supported, allow the affected countries to take ownership of the strategic initiatives concerning their future. Specifically, in terms of the resources made available to the affected populations, it is also desirable

that pledges be followed up with action and that reconstruction projects be actually implemented.

In a word, I would say that it would be very sad to see the left hand taking back what the right hand had given. The temptation exists; it is the result of a difficult global economic context. But, once again, truth alone must prevail, because when reconstruction is left to wait, the long wait can lead to impatience and bring harm. In the case of Haiti, as in other post-conflict situations, the United Nations and friendly nations should come to our aid to help us to reconstruct more than just a physical space, but reconstruct men and women, to whom we must give hope. Beyond concepts and abstractions, this is above all a human story. This is the new order we are here to speak of today: putting human beings back into the heart of the central debates of our time. This is the momentum in which we are caught up and which is shared by billions of people in the grip of disasters, forced exoduses, conflicts and epidemics.

In solidarity with those other victims, the Haitian people wish to send a very clear message from the platform of the United Nations. As long as there are men and women of good will, there will be hope. As long as there are nations united in solidarity, there will be hope. We in Haiti have experienced every conceivable kind of catastrophe: every form of man-made disaster and all the natural ones, aggravated by the systematic, irresponsible destruction committed by human beings. We have known epidemics and hunger, even marginalization, but Haiti is now back on its feet, ready to rebuild and ready for a new start. Nothing is predetermined. It is this new Haiti that is open to the world, this new Haiti that is open to new investments and collaborations, to reconstruction, dialogue and peace. And it is this new Haiti that says thank you to all those assembled here.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nkurunziza (*spoke in French*): I should like, first of all, to associate myself with previous speakers in congratulating the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session and the members of the Bureau for their election. We would also like to thank the President of the sixty-fifth session for his work in presiding over the Assembly last year.

We also take this opportunity to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his appointment to a second term as Secretary-General of the United Nations. That reappointment is vivid testimony of his successes in contributing to the promotion of international peace and security, human rights and sustainable development.

The process of consolidating peace in Burundi, with the support of the United Nations, led to the successful organization of the 2010 elections through a process of consensus and thanks to an electoral code that was published following consultations with all stakeholders. That spirit of dialogue in the process of consolidating peace, also allowed our parliament to establish an ombudsman position and an independent National Human Rights Commission. This same process has allowed us to develop a second set of instruments in our campaign against poverty, namely, the law governing political parties, new property rights codes, Burundi Vision 2025, a national strategy for democratic government, and the fight against corruption.

Genuine democracy now exists in Burundi. The examples referred to earlier, along with maintaining channels of communication, holding meetings with civil society and the process of implementing

transitional justice mechanisms, are all additional proof of this fact. Burundi has opened a dialogue with everyone. We can all note with satisfaction, then, that a new chapter has been opened in the history of Burundi.

Democratically elected institutions have led to peace for the first time. The people have decided what should be done, and there has been a peaceful transfer of power. I pay tribute to the people of Burundi for being able to break with the tragic habits of the past, in which the outcome of elections was not respected. Today, the institutions that have been established are legitimate and have the constitutional duty to protect the people, ensure the stability of the country and promote development.

Let us, however, have no illusions. There is still insecurity in the aftermath of the socio-economic reinsertion of former combatants. There are also ongoing problems with the transitional regime, along with a temporary decline in the economic situation of our people, which is traceable to problems in agriculture, climate change and a spike in prices generally and oil.

We should not forget the fact that Burundi is a post-conflict country. In that connection, we are pleased by the surrender of more than 80,000 weapons, which people have handed over. Furthermore, a disarmament commission has been established and the national police have begun to scout for weapons and confiscate them from criminals.

In the area of development, Burundi is continuing its efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The number of children is rising, as is that for teachers, because primary education is now free. We have undertaken a number of reforms to train our young people for employment. The Government has undertaken to bring together people in villages so as to ensure the provision of basic services such as drinking water, energy, health care, schools and decent housing, which facilitates reconciliation, security and job creation. This is in addition to free health care for children aged 5 and under and for pregnant women and women who give birth in public health clinics.

To that end, community-level endeavours have enabled us to build more than 2,024 schools and more than 80 health centres and set up more than 2,000 pumps for the provision of drinking water — all of this in three years and without any external assistance.

Numerous development efforts are being undertaken in several key national sectors aimed at enhancing the lives of our people, taking advantage of the integration of Burundi into the East African community.

We regret the continuing security-related incidents caused by armed bandits, land conflicts and the presence of negative forces in certain areas of the Great Lakes region. We were shocked by the terrible tragedy that took place in Gatumba on 18 September 2011. On that dark night, a bloody attack took place in a nightclub that caused the deaths of about 40 people — children, young people, elderly people — of all ethnic groups, genders and political leanings.

The Government reached out to the suffering people, paying the costs of the funerals and attending them. The Government also decided to provide treatment for all those who were injured during the tragedy, and a three-day period of mourning was announced and observed.

We strongly condemn that heinous attack and have called for an inquiry, which should be concluded within a month. Thanks to genuine cooperation on the part of the people, who, having demonstrated considerable restraint, denounced those who allegedly planned and carried out the attack, we are pleased to say that we have made progress in the investigations.

This is yet a further reflection of the commitment of the people of Burundi to peace, which should reassure everyone with regard to the viability and stability of Burundi. That act, while it calls for further vigilance on the part of us all, should not be considered to reflect the current state of our country; if should be seen as an act of terrorism — an isolated incident within the overall context of peace in our country. Such acts of terrorism, massacres and crimes against humanity are, unfortunately, being carried out in a number of countries, which makes it incumbent upon all of us firmly to combat them and bring their perpetrators to justice.

We call on the international community to unreservedly condemn this heinous act and to assist us in prosecuting the masterminds and their henchmen. We call also on the international community to support the operationalization of the National Independent Human Rights Commission that, in a positive step, was recently established in Burundi.

We take this opportunity also to note that investigation commissions are at work to shed light on the assassinations that have taken place in various parts of the country. We hope that the truth about these events will soon be known and those responsible will be brought to justice.

Our domestic situation is satisfactory, but we cannot but be aware of regional and international concerns. Thus the situation in Somalia, in which Burundi is deeply involved through its participation in the African Union Mission in Somalia, requires additional partners in order for the country to be stabilized and prepared for elections. Those efforts should be carried out in the context of international measures to combat terrorism and also to ensure food security.

In order to be successful in the combat against terrorism, global governance must be able to meet that challenge. There is therefore an urgent need for reform of the Security Council and ongoing interaction between the Council and the General Assembly on all issues of global interest.

Before closing, we would like to congratulate South Sudan on having joined the family of nations, and we support the resolve of the Sudan and of South Sudan to seek ways to peacefully settlement post-referendum issues.

We would like to close by calling on the Assembly to speed up the quest to find a balance between development and the survival of our planet.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Burundi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mori: Let me begin by extending my warm congratulations to Mr. Al-Nasser as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. His strong leadership will continue the high standard set by his predecessor. I wish also to express to the Secretary-General my deepest appreciation for his many contributions and accomplishments, one of which is his recent visit to the South Pacific island countries. I congratulate him and wish him well in his second term.

Last July, the Security Council took a giant step with the adoption of a presidential statement (S/PRST/2011/15) during its debate on the issue of climate change and its security implications. We were encouraged by that bold step.

As a member of the Pacific small island developing States (SIDS), we appreciate the unprecedented action taken by the Security Council as we continue to face the threat to our existence and the loss of territorial integrity and sovereignty resulting from the adverse impacts of climate change and sea-level rise. The concerns expressed by the Council in connection with climate change, in particular concerning sea-level rise as a security threat, is an important step.

We cannot but notice, however, the persistent failure and reluctance by some countries to address the security aspect of climate change, even in the face of overwhelming scientific evidence. We believe that those who opposed the debate in the Council and those who doubted the security implications of climate change simply ignored the obvious.

We respectfully ask those members who opposed the debate and those who are still in doubt to fulfil their responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations. We also take note of the positions of those who aspire to membership in the Council, and we thank those countries who supported our cause. I strongly urge the Security Council, and for that matter the whole United Nations system, to utilize innovative

ways to address the concerns of the most vulnerable Members of this Organization.

We are grateful for the historic visit by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to our region on the fortieth anniversary of the Pacific Islands Forum. It was also the first time in the 66-year history of this body that a Secretary-General has ever visited any Pacific small island developing State — on this occasion, Kiribati and the Solomon Islands. We are confident that the Secretary-General's visit will give a greater sense of urgency to the issue of climate change.

Climate change is no longer a hypothetical issue but a real tragedy, as we in the Pacific region are already experiencing its adverse effects. These impacts will continue to worsen until countries like mine disappear, unless immediate and decisive actions are taken by this body to mitigate climate change at first evidence.

It is imperative that we immediately begin to reduce emissions of long-lasting greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide. We must complement the action on carbon dioxide by reducing short-lived climate forcers such as black carbon, methane, tropospheric ozone and hydrofluorocarbons in order to prevent an additional increase of as much as one degree Celsius in global warming over the next decades. Reducing these short-lived agents is one of the surest ways to protect some of the Earth's most vulnerable regions such as the Federated States of Micronesia.

I therefore call upon the international community to join this strategic approach to meeting the challenge of climate change. The time to act is now.

More than 60 years ago, my island country, the Federated States of Micronesia, drew world attention as a battleground in the Pacific conflict. Today, the remnants of approximately 60 shipwrecks from that conflict are posing threats to the lives of our people, our environment and the marine ecosystem. Approximately 32 million litres of oil contained in the bellies of the wrecks are a ticking environmental time bomb. Leading experts on underwater corrosion have warned that the shipwrecks will collapse, and when they do, we believe that oil from these wrecks could create a spill on a massive scale, with an impact comparable to the disaster last year in the Gulf of Mexico.

Oil from these shipwrecks in my state of Chuuk has already started leaking. Any disaster could have a devastating effect on the environment, our food chain and the surrounding reefs that serve as breeding grounds for many fish species. It would also adversely impact our tourism industry, which depends largely on coral and shipwreck diving. Thus to avoid a major environmental disaster, I am now appealing to the international community for immediate assistance.

Twenty years ago my country gained membership in the Organization, just in time to become a part of the movement known as the Rio process. Out of that process, the principle of sustainability became a mandate for development. For the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio 20), Micronesia and other small island developing States have been calling for recognition of what we term the "blue economy". As island nations with millions of square miles of the blue Pacific, we naturally have particular affinity and concerns for the ocean.

Our ocean's resources have enormous strategic value. We depend on them for our subsistence living and cultural identity as seafarers of the Pacific. The blue Pacific has opened up new horizons in sustainable economic development activities. As custodian of these resources, we welcome the participation of our partners in the utilization of these resources, but for too long we have not received an equitable and fair share of our ocean bounties.

The development of our ocean resources is severely hampered by the continuous selfish behaviours of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. If unabated, these kinds of behaviour will continue to deprive our people and our nascent fishing industries of millions of dollars in revenues every year. The fishing industry is further adversely affected by ocean acidification caused by climate change.

Conservation and sustainable management of oceanic resources is important, because we will continue to depend on the ocean in the years ahead. It is for that reason that we have committed to various conservation activities in the Micronesian region. One in particular is our support for the establishment of shark sanctuaries. The Federated States of Micronesia has joined Palau and other countries in committing a vast area in our Micronesian region to be a sanctuary for sharks.

The current mechanisms for follow-up on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for Further Implementation are unlikely to provide the momentum necessary to take concrete steps as part of a results-oriented approach. New and additional measures to address the unique and particular vulnerabilities and development of SIDS are required.

Along with the Pacific SIDS, we are advancing a proposal for Rio+20 to consider a third Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS. We must build upon the momentum of Rio+20 to convene a third Global Conference to refocus and develop new and additional measures that are results-oriented to support the sustainable development of SIDS.

A special category for small island developing States is imperative if the United Nations is to improve the lot of the disadvantaged peoples of SIDS. After all, realities demand it. I therefore reiterate the call made last year by my own country and other small island developing States for the creation of that special category.

I am grateful for the attention paid by the United Nations High-level Meeting on Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) held earlier in the week.

It is a major concern for us in the Pacific SIDS that non-communicable diseases have reached epidemic proportions. If allowed to continue unabated, NCDs could potentially undermine our labour supply, productivity, investment and education, with devastating consequences for our economic development. I echo the sentiments on NCDs expressed by Pacific leaders regarding the importance of immediate and decisive actions by Governments, the private sector, civil society, regional and international organizations and development partners to work together to address what is now a human, social and economic crisis for us in the Pacific.

At the beginning of the current session, we witnessed history of another kind unfolding in the Hall. For the first time, a female President stood at this podium to open the general debate. I join other world leaders in congratulating Her Excellency Ms. Dilma Rousseff of Brazil on her many achievements. The challenge for this body is to continue to encourage women from all nations to participate on an equal basis at all levels of political decision-making processes. After all, women are equal partners in families.

In joining the debate on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, my country urges the international community to remain steadfast in upholding the principles of peaceful coexistence as enshrined in the United Nations Charter. We continue to support Israel's right to live within secure and recognized borders, free from the fear of terrorism. We also acknowledge Palestine's right to statehood, which can be achieved only through a negotiated settlement between the two parties. I agree with President Obama that there are no shortcuts to solving this problem.

Just halfway into the year, people everywhere are experiencing the impact of natural disasters, making it the costliest year on record. They have caused not only property damage but also the loss of human lives. I want to extend my people's sincere sympathies for the lives lost and the suffering everywhere.

On the twentieth anniversary of my country's admission to the United Nations, we pledge to do our best to support the goals of this Organization for the benefit of our people and all peoples around the world.

The Acting President: *(spoke in French)* On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Union of the Comoros.

Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Dhoinine (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour and a privilege for me to address this Assembly for the first time since I took office as President of the Union of the Comoros, on 26 May.

Allow me at the outset to warmly congratulate His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I wish also to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss and his entire team on their remarkable work. Lastly, I should like to pay a well-deserved tribute to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his commendable and unceasing efforts to ensure that our Organization can better meet its objectives in a world increasingly marked by all kinds of crises: political, economic, social and environmental.

The Assembly is convening in its sixty-sixth session at a time when all humankind is struggling through one of its most difficult times. Indeed, peace, the most precious common good in the world, has never been more threatened. It is under threat on all of our continents, in our regions, in our subregions and in every one of our countries. It is threatened by political crises, diseases and natural disasters. It is also threatened by poor living conditions, unemployment, insecurity and underdevelopment.

The hotspots that have emerged in various regions of the world and the recent uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East have claimed, and continue to claim, many victims. Our countries continue to be burdened by emerging diseases, but also and especially by non-communicable diseases. In fact, cancers, diabetes and, in particular, cardiovascular diseases have taken many lives in our countries and threaten their development.

The problem of education and the lack of basic infrastructure, energy and potable water also pose a threat to peace and security in many developing countries. Moreover, no country today is safe from natural disasters linked to climate change. This situation is all the more tragic in small island developing States such as mine.

I need not mention the toxic effects of the financial crisis, which continues to affect our countries and seriously compromises the future of the global economy. Therefore, I should like to issue an urgent appeal to the international community to enhance its role in seeking rapid resolutions of all of these crises.

Indeed, only by working together and effectively to fight disease will we be able to ensure that our populations are healthy and our human resources are more productive. By joining our efforts, we may also curb unemployment through education and job creation and succeed in re-launching the socio-economic development of our countries. In addition, eradicating corruption — which is increasingly rampant in our countries — will help us succeed in re-launching development, which is an essential factor of peace and stability. Moreover, by strengthening the culture of democracy and rule of law, our countries will evolve towards greater peace and stability, which are key conditions for sustainable development.

The President took the Chair.

We must further develop solidarity among the member countries of this concert of nations. That must be done to bring our world out of its vulnerable state. The efforts of the developing countries in increasingly difficult situations will not succeed without active solidarity. The quasi-collective mobilization effort seen today in Europe and generally in the West to stem the financial crisis is most commendable. However, it must be extended to other sectors and continents. Likewise, it is indeed appropriate to act swiftly and in unison to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which have inspired so much hope in our countries.

In this world in crisis, the Union of the Comoros has for the second time experienced an exemplary, peaceful change at the top level of the State. However, its solid footing in democracy and good governance will become truly irreversible only when poverty, misery and vulnerability cease to exist. That is why we have taken measures to fight corruption and to better use our national resources and preserve and protect biodiversity. Indeed, as a small island developing State that is directly concerned, we attach very special attention to the question of climate change and the environment. We work every day to improve the standard of living of our fellow citizens. But we also need the support of the international community.

In addition, and despite its difficult situation, my country will never set aside its responsibility to act within the international community. We intend to offer our modest contribution to mankind's quest for a better world. Thus we take an active part in building peace and security by participating in the Eastern Africa Standby Brigade, in accordance with the requests of

the international community. While we are aware that our means are modest, we intend to play our role within the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, because promoting peace anywhere in the world, particularly in Africa, remains for us a major imperative.

Terrorism, piracy and other transborder organized crime, including the trafficking of drugs and light weapons, are direct threats today to human security and to the national security of many countries. My country is doing its best to combat those scourges. But the international community must also provide greater assistance towards prevention, both structurally and operationally. Early warning mechanisms, exchanges of information and experiences, mutual assistance in training, organization and capacity-building will enable States and regional organizations, particularly the African Union, to enhance their capacities.

Issues that have remained unresolved, sometimes for decades, are sources of conflicts likely to jeopardize the cause of peace and security. That is the case in the question of Madagascar. The political crisis affecting the brotherly people of Madagascar deserves the full attention of the international community. The current efforts of the transitional Government, under the aegis of the Southern African Development Community, call for multiform support from the international community so that that large island can finally regain peace and security for the well-being of its people.

The same is true with regard to the question of Palestine. The Comoros has always supported the struggle of the brotherly Palestinian people and supports the request of the Palestinian authorities to the international community for the recognition of a Palestinian State in its borders of June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Indeed, for more than 30 years Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands has remained an unresolved issue. As for my country, it supports that recognition and appeals to all countries that love peace, freedom and justice to do the same.

The Union of the Comoros cannot have any other position on that question, since it is directly concerned by another equally sensitive question that affects not only its national unity, territorial integrity and history, and international law, but also peace in the Indian Ocean region. Here I refer to the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte.

Allow me to emphasize that the inclusion of the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte on the agenda of several sessions of the General Assembly and in relevant resolutions of the Assembly, the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation has not yet provided a solution to this thorny question, which has placed us in opposition to France for decades.

As the Assembly is aware, the unilateral decision of France to make the Comorian island of Mayotte a département is for us and for the international community null and void and can in no way be considered a fait accompli. Furthermore, the visa regime imposed by the French authorities on Comorians of the three other islands has broken up many families by turning the sea channel that separates Mayotte from its sister island Anjouan into a huge cemetery, where rest the remains of thousands of my compatriots who only wished to gain access to a part of their territory.

However, we cannot simply continue to condemn without any follow-up, or maintain fixed positions that do not contribute to the settlement of the issue, while we continue daily to witness many losses due to the visa regime imposed by France.

Therefore, I wish to reiterate from this rostrum my country's legitimate determination to continue to claim the reintegration of the Comorian island of Mayotte as part of its natural grouping. However, we hope to be able to conduct this struggle by means of the necessary negotiations with France — an economic partner of the Comoros — but also and above all through including our brothers and sisters in Mayotte, because there can be no realistic and lasting solution to the dispute without their involvement.

That is the new approach that I proposed as soon as I was inaugurated to settle the territorial conflict that has divided my country and France for just over 30 years. Indeed, I believe that any search for a solution to this thorny problem must include our Mahorais brothers and sisters, with whom we share ties knitted through history, blood, language, religion and culture. We believe that the large Comorian diaspora in France and the island of Réunion can join with its brothers and sisters of Mayotte and the other three Comorian islands in order finally to renew their natural bonds, carry out projects and live out their common destiny in harmony.

In this light, and in our desire to see this problem — which has lasted too long — be finally settled favourably and peacefully, that we hope to promote the negotiations with France and our Mahorais brothers and sisters that we believe to be essential.

Speaking of territorial integrity, I would like to make particular mention of countries that occupy a special place in Comorians' hearts. For the Kingdom of Morocco, a brother country whose legitimate positions on the Western Sahara my country has always supported, I hope that the dialogue being held under the auspices of the United Nations will quickly lead to a peaceful solution to the problem. To the People's Republic of China, that great country and friend to the Comoros, we here reaffirm our unfailing support for it in its legitimate struggle for one China, developing in peace and prosperity.

I cannot speak of justice and equity without bringing up the need for internal reform of our Organization, particularly the Security Council. We believe that only better representation of every continent on the Council, including the essential African presence as a permanent member, can ensure better cohesion within the international community and thus do away with frustration and antagonism.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the friendly countries and the regional and international organizations that continue to support us in multiple ways in our efforts to re-launch our country's socio-economic development. In particular, I thank Qatar, which hosted the conference on assistance in investment and development in the Comoros, the commitments for which have begun to materialize, thanks to the untiring efforts of high-level Qatari authorities. I would also like to thank the American Administration for its kind efforts to make our stay in this great and beautiful country enjoyable.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Union of the Comoros for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tong: I bring warm greetings from the people of Kiribati, on whose behalf I address the Assembly. I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session.

We gather here every year as world leaders to represent our peoples and to discuss issues of concern to the global community. At this session our theme is the role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, which is appropriate in its reminder to us that peace and security are indeed crucial to the continued harmonious existence of mankind on this planet.

As a global community we constantly face many challenges to our political, social and economic stability. Natural and human-induced disasters have caused much suffering in different regions of the world. Countries and peoples are facing all kinds of security threats from armed conflicts, terrorism, human trafficking, economic recession, climate change and its associated impacts. As a result, many communities suffer daily from increasing poverty, hunger and dislocation.

But how can all this be happening in a supposedly rational world community under the scrutiny of this global body? Is our existing Organization in its current form equipped to deal with these emerging issues, or is it time to review the structure and effectiveness of our international governance system?

The lack of progress on climate change negotiations clearly demonstrates the wide divergence

of positions on the issue. I believe that unless we can approach any mediation with trust and commitment, we will be caught in the vicious circle of starting with our differences, in our obsession to protect what we perceive to be our critical national interests.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comments based on his experience during his recent visit to Kiribati. His views are those of an independent observer who came, who saw and who believed. His comments are a powerful endorsement of what we, the most vulnerable countries, have been saying over the years, and my hope is that this will communicate the need for urgent action to all who possess a sense of moral responsibility. Climate change will remain the curse of our planet. Most nations perceive it to be a future event, but for the very few it is already reaching disastrous levels.

Some will argue that climate change does not fall within the conventional definition of a security threat, but that is simply because it may not be so for them at this point in time. In Kiribati, many young people go to sleep each night fearing what may happen to their homes overnight, especially during very high tides. The accelerated and continued erosion of our shoreline is destroying settlements, and as I speak, some communities are relocating on the island. I was glad that the Secretary-General was able to understand and feel for himself the sense of threat that our people and those of similarly vulnerable countries experience on a daily basis.

In the international climate-change forums there is ongoing dialogue and negotiation in an attempt to find amicable solutions to this threat. But there is an ongoing disagreement on how to address this global challenge. The question is: how much longer must we continue to argue about this? When are we going to do something about it? Our people and our children, whose lives and future are under serious threat, look to us for leadership. The urgency of the need for action cannot be overemphasized.

At Cancún, it was my understanding that there was agreement on the need for an urgent package to address the situation of the most vulnerable countries, which are now being seriously affected by the adverse impacts of climate change. Next year, we will gather again as world leaders to take stock of what we have done since the Rio Summit in 1992. It is my fervent hope that, in the light of current scientific evidence and based on the experiences of the most vulnerable countries, we as a global community will embark on bold and innovative initiatives to address the climate change challenge. I acknowledge with gratitude the adoption of resolutions 63/281 and 65/159 on the possible security implications of climate change and the protection of our global climate for present and future generations. And I thank those who saw and supported the need to classify climate change as a security issue.

In December, there will be another United Nations Climate Change Conference in Durban. I acknowledge that climate change negotiations will take several years to conclude, but I also believe that there is common ground on which there is no real debate. The urgent need for the flow of adaptation funds to address the more urgent adaptation needs of the most vulnerable countries is a matter on which I believe there is general consensus. But what is the point in consensus if no concrete action follows? Kiribati was one of the countries that did not sign the Copenhagen Accord because of what we saw as its serious shortcomings, but we were subsequently persuaded to associate ourselves with it on the premise that doing so would trigger the flow of much-needed adaptation funds that had been pledged. Today, we continue to await those funds.

We all want to achieve sustainable development. We are grateful to those who have continued to assist and partner with us on this journey, but our efforts at achieving sustainable growth will continue to be frustrated by external factors. Ongoing uncertainty in the global economic climate and rising food and fuel prices remain major challenges to our sustainable development efforts. On top of all that, our increasing preoccupation with the impacts of climate change will progressively dominate our national agenda.

It is no surprise, therefore, that we continue to be off track in the achievement of most of the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of our sustainable development agenda under our national development plan. Every step we take forward we are knocked back two or three due to the many challenges we face. It is therefore imperative that climate change adaptation funds be mobilized at the earliest opportunity. Otherwise, we will be forced to divert development resources towards the most urgent adaptation needs. Therefore, as we move towards Durban, it is our hope that the Green Climate Fund can

be operationalized as soon as possible to allow the most vulnerable countries to attend to their adaptation needs from new resources.

In the same vein, we believe that all nations and peoples — including Taiwan — that play a role in international affairs, including contributing to climate change, should also be part of the solution. During these difficult times, and facing challenges to our existing world order, we can ill afford to isolate any nation that has the capacity to assist in our struggles.

I believe that, as a global community, we must be united in our efforts to address any security threat to international peace and security, be it within States or between States. We need to forge consensus in our collective action to promote and maintain our collective security. Let us work together as a global community to address the many conflicts and disputes that are posing serious security challenges to our well-being, before they consume and condemn our civilization to oblivion.

In closing, I share our traditional blessing of health, peace and prosperity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the High Transitional Authority of the Republic of Madagascar

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the High Transitional Authority of the Republic of Madagascar.

Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the High Transitional Authority of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the High Transitional Authority of the Republic of Madagascar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajoelina (*spoke in French*): After three years of political crisis and a three-year absence, Madagascar is proud today to resume its place here in the community of nations. On behalf of my fellow countrymen, I am particularly honoured to participate in this general debate under the theme "The role of mediation in the settlements of disputes by peaceful means".

The successive crises around the world, most recently in North Africa, demonstrate the importance and relevance of that theme. Madagascar has been through one itself, and it has just taken a major step forward thanks to the help of international mediation, which has allowed the Malagasy to reach a promising consensus.

I also wish to pay a sincere tribute to the late Dag Hammarskjöld, the former Secretary-General of this great Organization, a pioneer of preventive diplomacy and an architect of the concept of peacekeeping, as we mark the fiftieth anniversary of his tragic passing. During his tenure, he worked tirelessly to solidify the legitimacy of the United Nations in the peaceful resolution of international disputes. Now again, we owe him a great debt for the universal recognition of the virtues of mediation in resolving tensions and even conflicts.

We have just commemorated the tragic events of 11 September 2001, which shook the city of New York and indeed the whole world. It is also 10 years since the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, during which the dialogue of cultures and the culture of dialogue were promoted on the international stage in order to combat the clash of civilizations.

Mr. Allam-mi (Chad), Vice-President, took the Chair.

When we speak of conflicts, we have in mind two different ideologies that do not uphold the same values. That can mean two countries, two regions or even a Government and its people. In the last case, when one no longer respects the other it triggers a popular uprising that ends in a conflict, leading to a crisis; hence, the importance of the role of mediation in settling disputes through peaceful means.

In that regard, any mediation should collate first-hand information. It should see for itself the realities prevailing on the ground in a conflict before proposing a solution that would be lasting and acceptable to all.

History has shown that the excessive acts of a leader who resorts to force have serious repercussions for his country that can lead it into chaos and cost the lives of dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of innocent people. It is an entire people who, unfortunately, suffer the grave consequences. This occurs because true solutions are often too slow in coming, plunging a large segment of humankind into poverty, since we must respond to suffering, anguish and despair. We want to change and we will change.

To better illustrate my words, allow me to speak of the case of my country, Madagascar. Everyone here knows as well as I do that the island of Madagascar has been in political crisis since late 2008. The Malagasy people rose up with determination to break with a past marked by poor governance and non-respect for democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law that gave rise to widespread impoverishment, unbearable and inescapable social poverty, and the growing frustration of the majority of my countrymen. The Malagasy people therefore demanded a better life and genuine change, with strengthened respect for universal principles.

When the search for a solution to the crisis turned to the principle of consensual and inclusive management of transition, and when that consensus proved difficult to reach, commendable mediation efforts among the Malagasy protagonists were made by local civil society organizations, the bilateral and regional partners of the big island, and the international community.

I permit myself to mention here and to strongly commend the untiring and patient efforts of the mediation team of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a regional body mandated by the African Union, as well as the determined initiatives of other entities, such as the United Nations, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the Indian Ocean Commission. The involvement of these and all actors concerned in the mediation was critical in responding with effectiveness and pragmatism commensurate with the emergency and in meeting the vital needs of the Malagasy people and economy, which could and would have been weakened if the crisis and the negotiations had lasted any longer.

The Malagasy people were patient and showed unprecedented and exemplary courage in the peaceful settlement of the political crisis, despite all the economic and social restrictions, as well as the absence of international aid that it has suffered for the past three years. The post-crisis road map for Madagascar, proposed by SADC mediation, was initialled on 9 March and signed by the political factions representing the vast majority of Malagasy stakeholders on 17 September. The great political Malagasy family is now determined to move forward and to work together in the overall interest of the nation for the well-being, peace and serenity of the entire people.

An extremely important threshold has just been crossed, but there is still much work to be done. Now, we must focus primarily on the implementation of the provisions of the road map, with full respect for the people's primary aspirations, leading towards the holding of free, credible, fair and transparent elections. That, in my opinion, is the only definitive solution to the crisis ensuring a return to constitutional normality.

We have finally managed to reach a consensus agreement, reflected in the sense of compromise of which we are particularly proud, based as it is in the inherent culture of *Fihavanana* — a notion of social life that has guided the Malagasy people since the dawn of time and that can be boiled down to the principles of fraternity, solidarity, mutual respect, tolerance and wisdom. We have thereby expressed our resolve to move forward towards the reconstruction and development of our society.

For my part, I will spare no effort and will do my utmost to ensure that these actions achieve the anticipated results and are rapidly crowned with success. I therefore launch a solemn appeal to the international community to make the needed individual and collective contribution to their implementation. In particular, I draw the attention of the United Nations to the work that it must undertake in assessing Madagascar's electoral needs so that an electoral timeframe, drawn up in a credible, neutral, transparent and independent way and based on respect for fundamental rights and international standards, can be established as soon as possible.

History teaches us that, even following the use of force, all wars and conflicts always end around a table. That clearly shows that mediation can be chosen as an alternative to weapons. We are opposed to the use of any form of repression whatsoever. It is entirely

possible to resolve differences by peaceful means, as in the case for Madagascar, by resorting to a more effective method, such as dialogue.

The world is evolving. The world is changing, and all of us leaders here want a better world for our respective peoples. Yes, it is possible, and we can do it.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the High Transitional Authority of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the High Transitional Authority of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 7.05 p.m.